the sensuous damned

andreas gripp

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Andreas Gripp

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NOTES

p. 1 **The Sharpener**: Harcourt Brace, book publishers.

p. 10 **Democracy is Dead in the USA**:
The 2nd stanza in italics is taken from the song, *Chicago,* by Graham Nash.

p. 13 **Fuck Your Blood-Red Moon**:
Chaney refers to Lon Chaney Jr. who played The Wolf Man (or Werewolf) in several movies in the 1940s.

p. 17 **For the Vernal Equinox**: The light from our Sun (Sol in Latin) takes 8 minutes and 20 seconds to reach the Earth.

p. 18 **For the Vernal Equinox**: ágapé is Greek for the kind of love that is familial, empathetic and compassionate.

p. 20 **Les Souris**: The title is French for *The Mice.* The 31st of Never is inspired by the song, *The Twelfth of Never,* by Johnny Mathis and written by Paul Francis Webster.

p. 22 **Les Souris**: Cinco de Mayo occurs every 5th of May and commemorates Mexico's

victory over the Second French Empire at the Battle of Puebla in 1862.

p. 23 **Les Souris**: *Eau de Nil* is French for Water of the Nile and refers to a pale, yellow-green colour.

p. 28 **You Think That I'm A Goth**: An *ouroboros* is a circular symbol of a snake or dragon devouring its own tail.

Bauhaus are an English rock band known for their dark image and gloomy sound.

p. 31 **The Sensuous Damned**: *It ain't over till it's over* was famously uttered by former New York Yankees catcher Yogi Berra, who said it whilst the Manager of the New York Mets in 1973.

p. 33 **The Sensuous Damned**: *Pochette* is French for a diminutive pocket and can refer to a small purse or handbag.

p. 35 **Sweet Jiminy!**: The title was often said in the place of using *Jesus Christ!* as an expletive or in exasperation or surprise.

p. 36 **Sweet Jiminy!**: Croquis is French for a sketch or preliminary drawing, often as a template.

p. 53 **Toto, or A Stoic's Nonchalance with All Things *Capitalist*:** Stoicism is an ancient Greek philosophy which emphasizes virtuous living and calmly accepting outcomes beyond a person's control.

A strawman is a fallacy in which a person's argument is misrepresented in the context of debate.

A non sequitur is a response that doesn't logically follow a preceding statement.

A red herring (mentioned as just a herring in this poem) is the introduction of an issue that isn't relevant to a present argument and is usually inserted to distract from the main point of discussion.

p. 68 **Redemption, or Nocturne No. 11 in G Minor**: A nocturne is a short composition for piano. The No. 11 in G Minor was written by Frédéric Chopin in 1839.

p. 69 **Redemption, or Nocturne No. 11 in G Minor**: Jimmy Valentine is a character from

the short story, *Retrieved Information,* by O. Henry, about a safe cracker who gives up his trade when he falls in love with a banker's daughter. When her young sister accidentally gets locked in a vault, Valentine must use his skills to save her.

p. 71 **The Shape of Twins & Words**: A homophone is 2 or more words pronounced the same but with *different spellings* or meanings. A homonym is 2 or more words pronounced or *spelled the same* but have different meanings.

p. 75 **Mare of the Night**: Ephialtes is Greek for a nightmare or the demon that causes one.

p. 76 **The Bleeding of Janine**: bric-à-brac is originally French and refers to small ornamental items or trinkets with little monetary value.

p. 77 **The Bleeding of Janine**: When blood is exposed to air it turns a scarlet shade of red.

p. 79 **Below the Surface**: The Earth is roughly 4.5 billion years old and 1 million years is less than three one-hundredths of one percent of this.

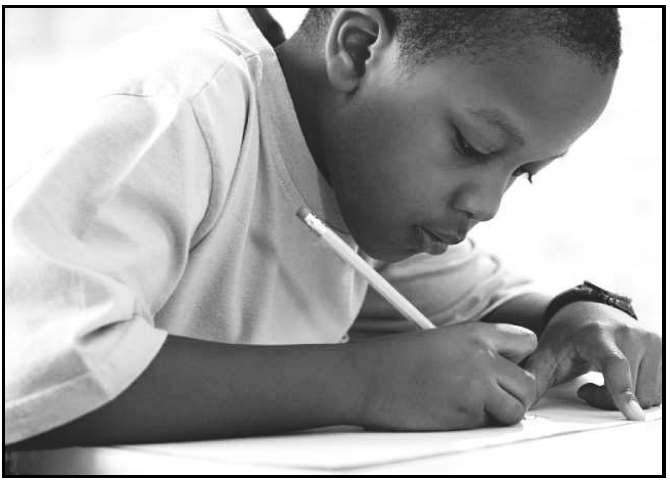
AUTHOR'S NOTE

Of the 26 poems in this collection, 22 were written between the 11th and 24th of March, 2025—shortly after I turned 61. 4 are new versions of earlier poems that seemed to merge with ease into this volume. At this moment, I'm not sure what—if anything—will follow. For those who've been with me for the past 30 or so years of this poetic trek, thank you. This book is in dedication to you.

—Andreas
April, 2025

I'd rather laugh with the sinners
than cry with the saints

—Billy Joel, *Only the Good Die Young*



The Sharpener

In those days,
the plot was only
as sharp
as pointed lead.
HB didn't stand
for Harcourt Brace—
not yet,

and every yarn
dependent
on a narrow shaft of
wood, a hexagon
swaddling graphite
like the wrap of
a pogo dog;

my hero
locked in peril
whenever the barb
had lost its bite—

as if the break
of a daring tooth,

one that's lost its
battle
with peanut
brittle,

the precipice
crumbling *beneath*
his fading feet, the story
going grey upon the
page, his damsel
snatched by claws
of a hungry griffin,
sketched along the
side so horribly,

both awaiting rescue
by the sharpener
on the wall, its holey
maws of eight, the round
of a rotary
dial, the insertion
a guesser's game—

botched, like the very first
thrust of sex, at 14
years of age,
or gambling
on the 7
in roulette,
when you've just
turned 21,

its daily
grind of pencil, cranked
into its duty
like a forlorn
Model T, shavings
like the fallen
peels of apples, potatoes,

each one with their
own little tale to
tell.

Skinflints

Everyone's a bloody
cheapskate
in Chesapeake Bay.
The tips are never
more than 1%. And that's
if the service is good.
Value has no money
here. Dyslexia's
overgrown
with rundown weeds.

In this burgeoning
mother of waters,
everyone's donning
rags. They're too stingy
to splurge on patches,
all *thumbs* with
needle & threads.

How this place
rejoiced
in the early
'20s,

the teens in holey
jeans. And now that
they're out-of-fashion,
Bubba throws his
oysters off the boat,
loads its leaky deck

with a hundred-thousand
pairs of knee-less *Lees*,
haggled
from the bins
of Sally Ann.

And as for the love
of old tobacco—the ghost of
every Slave attests to that.
They say you hear the
coughs from Appalachia,
the stench from bad
cigars. They roll them all in sheets
of carbon paper. Used until
the Covid came to call. Then served
as masks with twist ties
for their ears.

The face of one
and all stained midnight
blue. They'd wash it off
with soap but they are
frugal,

insisting that there's nothing
like the brisk and salt of
sea to rub them clean.
Smelling like the
fish that they will eat
with every meal. Even with
dessert. See them in
Chantilly where every berry
should have been.

Democracy is Dead in the USA

how can you run when you know?
—Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, *Ohio*

This will never be didactic.
Nor a list of horrid wrongs.
It's not that kind of poem.

I could have *wrote*
of Russian hacks. How Elon
knows his way around a
computer's wall of fire.
How the drones
disappeared in the press.
The erasure of
they & *them.* The history
of the Black now
whited-out.
The expulsion
of a human

who is *legally*
no more.

That Paula's
no longer welcome
to kick the ball, its
checkered cream and
sable—unless she
goes back to *Paul.* Shreds
her Sunday dress.

But I won't *scrawl* that kind
of poem.

Everyone's read the news.
There's no need
to merely tell it like it is.
How Ukraine's under the
bus. How Palestine
will simply never *be.*
That there's no such thing as
swaths of *genocide*—rolled
up good and tight
like bales of hay—

not while Jesus'
chosen vessel
is in charge.

The boats of Panama—his.
The goose of Canada—his.
Greenland's just a greenback—
the shade of an American
buck.

Maybe you're expecting
how we'll all rise up together
in a swell. A surge
to wash the White
away from House. It's
simply not my cup
of Boston tea.

In the end
I cannot say it.
Regurgitate
cliché.

But we've been here
once before,
while all was
embryonic:

Won't you please come to
Chicago
just to sing?
We can change the world.

Seagulls
snatching *fries*
along the beach.
Strewn about
like soldiers
on the shore.
Face-down
in *sacrifice.*
If they have
a face, that is.
Their sour *vinegar.*
Some Friday afternoon
at 3 o'clock.

I'm just
across the lake
from red & blue,
its stars of milky
light—now fifty
coins of silver
in their pocket,
still waving in the
gale just like a
friend, ever-flailing
back and forth
for our attention.

Fuck Your Blood-Red Moon

No, I refused
to stay *up*
to watch it, its shadow
moving slower
than a constipated
sloth.

I see the bloody
moon
inside my dreams,
its harbinger
of utter *calamity,*
prophecy from
the Christ, unbeknownst

it's more than a
dime-a-dozen,
when you factor in
our 4-billion
years existence.

If I eye another poem
about the moon
I'll surely howl.
In a Ginsberg
kind-of-way—
Chaney
take a seat.
And to hell with
your thumb's lunula,
the applause
from a lonely hand.

What we're really
lacking
are the odes from
crater-face!—

the swoon of seeing
the hottest girl in
school, sneering at all
the pimples

which quickly
left you scarred,

donning a bandana
just hoping they'd forget,
think that you were cool,
there in English Lit
in "silent reading,"

knowing *every* celestial
object

will never
make a sound,
that there's many other
orbs than just our *own*—
forever on display
until we're bored,

or maybe it's
only me, sickened,
from a million tired
tropes
read every day,

every night
I'd rather snore
beneath my slumber,

a single hand
that relieves
itself of itch; nails

utterly bitten
as by a wolf—
down to the rising
arc of the Sirius
star—mistaken
every moment
for our moon,

with never a
pall of *red*
to veil its visage,

a sluggish parade
of light
I've seen a pack of
times already,

my eyelids
losing the fight
to stay agape,

wondering
where in the world's
insomnia
when you need it.

For the Vernal Equinox

Snowdrop—
its namesake a mollified
melt.

Drooping
in a tepid beam's
arousal.

Spring—
an octuplet of
minutes away—

the strength to stand
up straight
for another go.

Sol—
93 million
miles
until its sustenance
will bathe.

And in the end
the flower
holds alone
our world's resplendence.
See it like the flash
and blink of star. Gone
before we've offered
our endearment.

Those which *drone*
are forever in their
heaven. The sticky-sweet
of comb. The taste
on our daughter's tongue.
Pretending
she has wings
by which to hover.

They say to us,
ágapé—a torch
that's arisen
to the surface—

by another and another
and another.

Their seed which sail the air.
Land as an oblation.
Bestowed by patient
gods
we don't deserve.

Les Souris

Come again? When will *I*
be stopping by? Try the
31st of Never.

I'm tired of the
droppings. The bounce
of every flea. But it's
you I most despise.

Never is my favourite
of the months. Even *more* so
than each June, when everything's
a-bloom and deftly breezy.

Never has a *dozen* holidays.
Stay-in-bed
is always every Sunday.
You go to *your* church,
I'll stay in mine.

Another will arise
when voluntold:
I'd really like to help,

but *it's only when you need me*
you're in touch,
and that falls upon the
7th.

The 4th and final
Saturday's
rather special: *Bananas*
don't turn brown
within an hour,

from the Grocer's,
the only day of the year
in which it happens.
I swear that they were
verdant—when we'd loaded
up our cart with squeaky
wheels. The sound of
a thousand mice.

And speaking of food,
Never has the feast worth
waiting for—

in honour of
the venerable
St. Screw You!
All-you-can-eat
Tostitos, an affront to
Cinco de Mayo, 30 *bags*
I have to hide
come May the 5th.

There's flavours
from Baskin-Robbins
that they've never
tried before, one
for every day:

frankly, I list
kale & avocado
as my favourite, its touch of
sage
the colour of my lawn,
that I'd get
around to cutting—
if not for the 29th—

Ottoman Liberation
Day, which has nothing
to do with the Turks,

my feet upon its
vinyl, in honour of
the loafers
who've been forced
out to their yard,
told to trim the
hedges, rake the
swinging leaves
now *eau de Nil,*

take the trash
out to the curb—
which, ironically,
has never been taken
away the month of Never.
Every rodent gorging
in the green
of garbage bins, *le vestige*
of celebration.

April's Very First

This day of fools
should not be crisp
and frigid

but it is—
the buds, pregnant
with baby leaves,
a big-bang sort of
burst that's yet to come
but not today.

Today will see the
puddles white to ice, shrouding
these shallow mirrors
of the birds, narcissistic
avians that they are,

knowing that we're enamoured
with their beauty, so much so
we offer up our millet,
peanuts, seeds and berried
fruit,

the wino on the bench
who's right beside us
in the chill—not even
flung a *husk*
of week-old crust,
nor a *name*
within this poem
by sleight of pen,

indebted to the frost
of April morn, an opportune
chance to stagger
past a pothole—
without the grim
and sudden *gasp*
from his reflection,

there beneath the lamp
of Yahweh's light,
made the fourth and cruellest
day of His creation,
ever-so-vain and showy,
doing *nothing* to make it better,

hogging all the sky
before a trillion other stars
take up the night,
their warmth so far away
it can't be felt, sadistic
like this Jester's
ruse of pageant,
the shame it will inflict
on us, deceived.

You Think That I'm A Goth

and not because I'm
pulled
by the colour *black.*

Actually, all the pigments
combined will equal black.
So it's really just
considering
every *hue* that breathing
gives us. And rainbows
aren't it. Their unicorns
never real. A lie
to every child.

Give me the
darkest stallion
you can find. Riderless.
Its neigh
more like a demon's
gravelly throat,

one that's forged in
flames;

that when everything
is burned
it turns to *noir.*

My wildest dreams
occur
there in the dark. In a nightly
occultation.

And before you brood
I'm sketching *ouroboros*

think again. I've no
Bauhaus
on my playlist.
I never had a crush
on Wednesday Addams.

It's just my tortured
poems, my scrawling
on the two-face
of existence,

that living has an
unhinged way of doling
out its payoffs:

the juggling of
the acorns
in the woods—
the one that's dropped
the winner, will one day
soar three-hundred
fucking feet
into the sky;
then chopped into
a puzzle for IKEA;

the emaciated, gasping
boy
in South Sudan,
the in-and-out of
flies in caving nostrils;

and then the half-a-
billion *charge*
towards the egg,

only one to wear the
laurel, thinking that it's
won the prize of life,

the untold thrill of
defeat
that's still to come,
the agony

of my supposed
victory.

The Sensuous Damned

All of us
are hell-bound
in a Yogi's picnic basket.

Forget my alteration
of this weary
allegory—having nothing
at all to do with *Jelly-*
stone. There's little in our
lunch to tempt a bear.

It ain't over till it's
over. So let's kick *back*
all the brandy
that we can.
With one-hundred-
twenty Xanax. Shaped like
blocks of Pez. The maxxing
of its strength,

that vows to keep us
calm until the end.
We'll never be afraid
our final moments.

Twisting
to the Beatles
before their days with
Maharishi. Shouting
from the geysers
Paul is dead!

Knowing that it's
minutes till we join him,
say he was indeed
the *lucky* one,
have a look-alike
take his place, a mop-top
while he crashed
to a violent
sleep.

We will *balk*
at all the gurus,
say their pitches
missed the plate.
We'll explore
our sense of stroking,

inhale as much mesquite
as we are able, click our
lips together like *pochette;*
launch your little hand-
bag to the blue of
empyrean—dependable,
ever-trusty like *Old*
Faithful,

which they say will
be the spark
to kill us all, the clouds
from molten rock, blinking
out the sun
that's here and gone,

our ash
to tag along, from the fall
of our Du Mauriers'
dénouement,

like the remnant
of the dust
from which we sprang,

His breath into our
noses,

so we could bask
in the teasing *scent*
of fruit's forbode;
its taste beyond our
touch, existing
so we'll sin
for next to nothing,

locked from some
supposed *paradise,*
that was never
really heaven
to begin with.

Sweet Jiminy!

When did *crickets*
become the poster
boys

for the *absence*
of applause?
The cheerless
audience:

for the joke
you think plunged *flatly*
on its face, along with
seven *poems*
on your Bar Mitzvah,
the cantor
out-of-tune
while we cringed in
queasy silence.

It's time I've
become an *optimist*
like the self-help
Rabbis preach.

Maybe they're screeching
encore!—
and we've clearly
never known it.
Forgot about their Disney-
inked croquis,

his top hat
and umbrella, standing *in*
for Jesus Christ

whenever someone
stubbed their toe,
something
they can't relate to
since they have no
human feet—

just their slender,
soothing whistles
at the back of the
orchestra,

ascending
with the friction
of their wings,

singing that
they love us
to some Gepetto
in the sky,

knowing *Pinocchio*
only told
the bitter truth.

Ruby Red

Grandma ate her
grapefruit
over the sink,
taking her
husband's advice,
saying it kept the
squirts

from messing up the
walls & kitchen table.

And *today,* from stinging
her jaundiced eyes.
The peel
looking back
at her in kindship.

After grandpa
passed away—
died—she mutters in
tart correction,

she began to devour
everything
in the very same
way: her tuna &
tomato
on a crusty, whole
wheat toast, every
single crumb
caught in the basin,

spaghetti
and the splatter of
its sauce, washed
into her pipes
with Baileys Cream—
both organic, inorganic;

saving on the drudgery
of dishes, the silence
of wash & dry—
the only living thing
they'd do together—

and now she's *there*
between the lines
of blemished blinds,
window that's
alight
to the evening
world, hunched over
like Quasimodo,
furrowed lips which
stretch
below the chrome
of a dripping
faucet,
one that cleanses all
that's spilled and
fallen,

one lonely
lamentation
at a time.

Clair de Lune
—for Rico

Our moon's a prime
example of less-is-
more. Its slivered,
crescent shine. Its mountains
on the brim of light and
dark. Risen like a curve
of chiselled braille.

Like a face that's
glimpsed in *profile,*
never looking you
in the eye. Its mix of
smooth and scar
that's nearly hidden.
A veil in silhouette.
A broad, funereal
umbra. Mourning
yet another
cataclysm—maybe
our existence.

If I could only
read its message
then I'd share it with
the earth. My telescope:
the perfect
go-between.
As it was for Galileo.
Its sibilance
in his ear that we are
specks along the edge,
as far away from centre
you could get. That it's only
with our eyes shut
we can see. Why the blind will
know its language. Its sickle
in the stars. Singing we are
triflings to be threshed.
Its notes on a single
staff. Not crescendo
but a piece by
Debussy: serene,
misleadingly uplifting,

which I never learned to
play
when I had the
chance, so caught
up in the sky
while just a boy,

its shadows and its gleam,
its trembling, bleeding
voices in the night.

My Cat Is Half-Greek,
or Zeus Left the Acropolis Open Again

My cat communes
with the mythical, with the infinite
and glorious invisible,
getting an inside track
on the weather
and when the sky's
about to change its tune.

My cat leaps up and tells me
whenever it's about to rain,
by the way she wiggles her whiskers
and tilts her head
beside the bathroom wall.

My cat instinctively knows
when it's going to pour
in Noachian proportions,
when the neighbours
will pound the door
and beseech us to let them in,
their basements flooded
and the water still rising.

Silly cat, tumbling around
with slanted head
and twitching whiskers—
I'm only turning on the shower.
Go back to your bed of sleep—
and *dream*
of chasing moths
in the garden,
the sun more vivid
than an Orion Nova
and your shadow in pursuit
as you run.

Let's not talk of storms today
despite the warnings
you sense from above:

Perhaps those sounds you hear
are the thunderous applause
from the pantheons up from their seats,
as Taurus snags the matador;

the rumbling
that of Hercules in hunger,
starving for the love of Deianeira,
she who brings his eyes
to overflow
with spit and drizzle,

a few simple sobs
to remind us men and beasts
that the deities too
feel that which pains us all,
blotting out the sun
when there's none to share
their sorrow.

Or it may only be Aphrodite
who is beckoning
you for dinner,
unaware you have a home
with *me,*
cavorting with the mortals
since we bow to your meows
and purrs,

our closest, intimate link
to both the eternal
and the divine.

Pulp

No one wants
their book used
as a doorstop.
But I say it's the
highest honour
that a writer
could ever get—

its pages that are
open at the middle,
laying on its spine
that's crudely broke,
virginal up till now,
as if waiting for this
moment all the while;
spread *broadly*
like a woman
of the night, directing
the ins-and-
outs of those who
enter.

And maybe
that's the reason
why you never read my
poems, their disgusting
metaphors. So I'll
change this story, fast.

I want my sonnet
in the center
to be *useful* for a
change. Beneath
the bottom wood—
pinned—like some
play of S&M. Damn
I've done it again—
time for another
take:

with no *space*
to push on through—
unless you're a
mouse, of course.

They're known
to squeeze forth
tightly like the paste
from a Colgate tube—
near the end
of its supply; furled
like a roll of jelly,
that caused my *cavities*
to begin with,
or like the garden
hose in summer
from which I guzzled,
oblivious
to the microbes,
eyeing the neighbour's
wife in her *bikini.*

But I digress
just one more time.
With me they'll be
suspicious—the *mice,*
that is—

like taping a
sheet of *Steal Me!*
on your windshield,

thieves suspecting
traps, me afraid
that Allstate
will be wise to
my charade,
that I've always
wanted another
in which to cruise,
with a bombshell
and her hair
against the gust,
sultry and explosive,

her one hand
on my knee,
the other
with a tome
which I'll deny,

scream *I have*
no pseudo-
nyms!

Pages rippling
madly in the
wind, yet strong enough
to prop
the heaviest egress
I can fathom.

Toto, or A Stoic's Nonchalance
With All Things *Capitalist*

Your straw man's
just a hop on down
from another *non-*
sequitur. He's propped
up in your field
without a crow.
There amid the herrings.
His overalls
only reaching
to his wrists—
thinking that I'm
fine about the status
of his shoes. Made by
pre-pubescents
in Malaysia. With
not enough to
feed their barking dog.

Whatabout my jacket
in the rain? The cost
of staying dry
amid deluge?

How many
gnarly fingers
made it so?

Fine. I will clad him
head-to-toe
in only ethics.
Feign he isn't nude.
Watch him on his
merry skip to Oz,
shedding every shaft
along the way,

maybe one that's neatly
picked up by a beak—
displacing yet another
olive branch,
proclaiming the world
has finally dried, see our *peace*
in every witch
who's melted down,
the price for squandered
buckets,

the man of
tin still heartless
in his slippers, red with
lion's blood, or a girl's
who left the fields
for winding gold—

brick by brick by brick—

wedged into the ground
and leading nowhere
every turn.

Oh, Bother

Bounce up and
down on the
spot
a hundred times.
It'll loosen your
internal plumbing.
Save you the cost
and taste
of Metamucil.

And that's when I
said *enough.* I am NOT
gonna write this down.
This isn't *thoughts from the*
bathroom stall;
I'm much too classy
for that.

We never see our
heroes—heeding
nature's summons.
The Bradys
used the room—

for what it
supposedly was:

washing their hands &
feet. Give their teeth
a cleansing brush.

Clark Kent was in the
restroom
just to change
into his duds. Sometimes
just to "rest."

I noted this *cockamamie*
farce a little sooner,
with poor ol'
Winnie-the-Pooh,
an h upon the *end*
so all us kids
won't misconstrue,
laugh he's full of
shit, there within his
house, in the base
of a *walnut* tree,

naturally high in
fibre, but no facilities
to be found,

just shelf after shelf
of honey, getting stuck
on nearly everything
around,
within,

giving him the
time to ever-ponder, words
now at the ready, easily
scrawled on page,
knowing the greatest
lines will strike you
while you're otherwise
indisposed.

Monday, 7am

You greet me with
Morning, never
Good Morning—
like you did when
hearts were younger.

Morning
will rise from
horizons, like an inmate
from a metal bed,
nothing to cushion
his nightmares—
sentenced to relive
a *life*
that isn't a life—
the cursing, the welts,
the bruises;
the slop passed off
as food;

the absence of
privacy,
when one needs it the
very most,

gone with a swirl
& gurgle.

Good Morning
is harkened by
glows, the lilt
from a lark
at dawn, the gradual
lift of the light,
each moment
far brighter
than the last.

Morning is stating
the obvious,
the drudge of a
turtle-drive,
the blaring of
horns at red,
a finger in the *air*
from the car
that will pass you
on the right.

It's the demand
from your boss
to get cracking,
the indigestion
from the eggs—expired,
the coffee from *McDonald's*
too acidic,
the leaving of
your kitchen
without a kiss.

Good Morning
is the merge
of fervent lips,
the ecstasy
of a lingering
hug,
a taste
from the dreams
before,

the confession
of a love
that never wearies,

never reaches
for a cup

until the curtains
have been opened
and you stand
in gaping awe
at what's to come.

The girl I might have married

The girl I might have married
had we met
is on the other side of the street,
a walking blur
I only notice for a second.

And her hair is a shade of blonde
or maybe brown I can't recall,
nor anything about the jacket
she'd been wearing nor the boots,
only that for some silly unknown reason
we might have married had we met,

maybe at the bookshop
where I would have bumped her arm,
said sorry for my blatant
clumsiness, which caused her to drop her
classics and a dictionary too;

or it may have been at a party,
hosted by a mutual
friend,

finding that we shared
a favourite song,
or that we're social
democrats,
or that neither of us
can stand
the sight of blood;

then again,
it may have been something
random—

her seated in the row
just ahead,
in a theatre
with a paltry slope,
her failure to remove the hat
that blocked my view,
my gathering the brazen courage
to tap her shoulder,
whisper into her ear
that I'm unable to see a thing.

Upon Our Awakening

Upon our awakening,
you ask why men
want sex
first thing in the morning.

It was merely a kiss
on your cheek.
You read a tad
too much
into it,
not *bon matin, my love,*
did you sleep well?
but *dear god*
I need to fuck

like a dam about to burst
or that final moment
on earth,
when we only have seconds
to live,
before the fabled flash of light,
then cinders.

Epiphany

All of us are
smitten by the *cute.*
And the shine of
symmetry. The clear, un-
blemished skin
of stunning's layer.

I could sing
each varied *note*
of your cantata. In
its proper key. Something
that's beyond
my scratchy throat.
My wineless inhibition.

You say the loveliest
intonation
was from a haggard
in the alley,
bottle on its side
beside her feet—bare,
sniffed out by a rat's
consuming hunger—

Mama take me with you.
Reach down with your hand
upon my face.

Now replace that
newborn kitten
with a shoe. A soiled,
baby's boot
found in a slum.
Fractured by a
wheel that wasn't
looking.

Cradle it in your palm.
Mouth it a lullaby.
Know nothing is so
broke it can't be loved.

Redemption,
or Nocturne No. 11 in G Minor

There's a moment
after midnight
when the key no longer
works. The doorknob
will not budge. Its
slit denying entry.

Like the lock
that wouldn't pivot
in junior high.
Frozen just past zero
on the dial. In front of the
darling girl you couldn't
forget. Eleven to the
right. 36 left. And something
that was third you can't
recall.

There's apparently sixty-
thousand random
combinations to be had.
And yours was prone to *rust.*

So in dreams you're
Jimmy Valentine,
needing to crack
a safe in the name of
love. Figuring *just* how many
chances you have left
before you're flummoxed.
Whether you are *hero*
or a phantom incubus.

But please, take your sweet-
ass time. There's nothing more
off-putting than a hand that's
indecisive, sweating in rotation,
a maiden in a
vault securely latched,
breathless in the
dawn of 12am,

a wheel before the
entrance
to a fortune, simply begging
to be spun.

The Shape of Twins & Words

By now you know
depression is a curtain.
One that moves
a dozen different ways.
Vertical, plunging to a stage
once all the claps & bows
are done. A lift in which
you're the only one
in nosedive. Sometimes
getting stuck—

as an elevator
tends. Hoping no one else
pops in on your
descent

to the bottom floor.
Or a parachute that's
torn—someone with their
arms up to the clouds;
arrow dropped,
reaching for a bow
that isn't offered.

Tied
up like a knot
upon a gift. The bulge
in the branch of a tree
that will not save.

Speed's not *relative*
to this story. How slow or
fast you fall. It's not about
the gloom of mental illness.
Of something slightly
sunken. Recessing
every moment
like the stocks.

Forget the *homo-*
phones, the silly
homonyms. It's on the
drapes
themselves. Their bullet across
the window. The swish
of its rolling tug.

The curtain has a tear
besides the middle's
natural split. It might not
be a rip

but a leak that's pushed
on out from the
duct of eye. It depends on how
you read it. Both & maybe
neither. It depends on how you
read it.

Read it like a poem
about a curtain. That I said
it's drawn in ways of ten
plus two. And I've only
etched a *pair.*
Say that I am lazy.
That drawn could be
construed—

in more
than a single way.

Filled in
with the lead of
coloured pencils.
Leading me into dark.
The smudging out of
sun. That a star from which
we're made

is so helpless against the
sheer & cloth of mood.
That sheer denotes
unmitigated strength

I've never had.
That I've failed to mention
curtains also rise. Held up by a
hook about to give.
Either something that's
bestowed or about to
break. I never said I'd tell
you which is which.

Mare of the Night

They say the climate
in this place
is somewhat funny.

It freezes
when it's humid.
Skate in 30 C
there in the coals.

Don a sweater
if you sweat.
Ray-Bans
when it's cloudy.

People with umbrellas
in the sun. Afraid of turning
orange
like some *he*
who isn't named.

This isn't the place
for tourists. It's outside
the American dream,

an *ephialtes,*
a horse with
flaring nostrils
from the hell of
’25:

all four winds at
once,

some spectre
of the poles
beneath our feet,
the crack of split-
ting ice,

that you could dig
your way to China
with a sponge,

rain *melting*
in our hands
as if it’s snow.

The Bleeding of Janine

Now go, attack the Amalekites
and totally destroy all that belongs to them.
Do not spare them; put to death
men and women, children and infants,
cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.
—1 Samuel 15:3

There's nothing
that awaits us
after death—

and that's the *final*
time you spoke.
Cancer of the throat.
Your plume
of wispy smog
as through a flue,

then above
the bric-à-brac
of mottled sky,
the baubles
you collected

while you stoned
your days away,

bubbling up
in contact
with your sinning's
exhalation,

your yawp
of unbelief—

what about the
babies
of the slaughtered
Amalekites?

just before the *brakes*
of bus gave way,

a guilty, scarlet
alphabet
no blood
would wash away.

the last haiku on earth

hide and bone in sand
the fruit flies on a carcass
no one left to pray

Below the Surface

It won't matter
a million years from
now I love you.

It doesn't mean a
thing your favourite
team won the Stanley
Cup. The Not-So-Super
Bowl. I hate to say
there's no *immortality.*
Your record in
a hundred meters
will be nothing but
vile dust.

A million years is
0.022
percent—of geologic
time. That means
nothing means a thing
when all is said:
this scribble, my name,

the fact that they ignored
me when my books
were on the shelf.

If I float to the ocean
floor, the best that
I can hope for
is to come back as an
urchin,

leave a fossil
for some future
generation,

have some imprint
in a rock
below the surface,
some pattern
that is studied,
by a species
to be better than
we ever hoped to be—

perhaps the progeny
of dolphins,
growing an opposable
thumb, somehow
just below
their dorsal fins,

their brains
eclipsing ours
within the waves
of their new Eden—

speaking in their tongue
that war has passed,
that we apes have climbed
on back
to our fruity trees.

Andreas Gripp was born and raised in Treaty 6 Territory (London, Ontario) and in 2024 relocated to Leamington with his wife, Carrie. He's the author of over 30 books of poetry, including *Clocking the Equus: Poems Selected and New* (2025). His poems have been praised for their lyrical and literary merit, accessibility, and for their blend of comic and poignant storytelling.

A long-time Londoner, Andreas Gripp now lives in Leamington, Ontario along the shore of Lake Erie with his wife, Carrie. The author of over 30 books of poetry, his poems are inspired by the contemporary experiences of both common & uncommon people endeavouring to survive the 2020s.

The third book in the Roaring '20s 2.0 trilogy, *The Sensuous Damned* is both a finale and a beginning in itself. Characters who struggle with themselves as much as with other persons tilting on the tightrope above the line of "saint" and "sinner." Poems which are lyrical, cadential, and always unexpected.

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